

Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
U.S. Application No. 10/018,342

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 have been examined and have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Also, the Examiner has indicated that the claims contain allowable subject matter.

Preliminary Matters

The Examiner has not acknowledged the drawings filed on December 19, 2001. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner indicate, in the next Office Action, whether the drawings are acceptable.

Also, on pg. 2 of the Office Action, the Examiner cites to 37 C.F.R. § 1.126 and maintains that the claims have been renumbered. However, 37 C.F.R. § 1.126 states that claims are to retain their original numbering during prosecution, and can be renumbered by the Examiner once the case is allowed. Accordingly, the claims should not have been renumbered at this stage in prosecution.

In any event, Applicant has not canceled any claims which would require renumbering. The Preliminary Amendment filed on December 19, 2001 only lists the claims that were being amended (i.e., Amendment was filed *prior* to rule change which requires status of all claims). It appears that the Examiner viewed this as canceling claims 14, 16, 19 and 20. Therefore, the Examiner assumed there were only 16 claims left in the Application. The undersigned contacted the Examiner on October 18, 2004 to discuss the discrepancy. The Examiner requested that the Applicant indicate the error in his formal response to the Office Action. Further, since claim 1 contains allowable subject matter, and claims 14, 16, 19 and 20 are dependent upon claim 1, the

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Examiner indicated that such claims would likewise be considered allowable if the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph are overcome.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

The Examiner has rejected the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Accordingly, Applicant has amended the claims in a manner believed to overcome the rejection. Such amendments are not made in view of any prior art and do not narrow the scope of the claims. Applicant also made additional amendments to the claims for clarity.

In regard to claim 9, the Examiner maintains that the phrase, “the open end” does not have antecedent basis. However, “an open end” is first introduced in claim 8, on which claim 9 depends. Therefore, Applicant submits that “the open end” of claim 9 has proper antecedent basis.

Allowable Subject Matter

As stated above, the Examiner has indicated that the claims contain allowable subject matter. In view of the amendments, Applicant submits that claims 1-21 are now in condition for allowance.

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Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

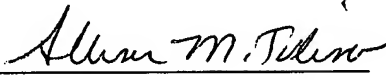
Respectfully submitted,

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
Telephone: (202) 293-7060
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

WASHINGTON OFFICE

23373

CUSTOMER NUMBER


Allison M. Tulino
Registration No. 48,294

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